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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. BEEF IMPORTS, U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused December 31 news coverage on the United States' statement in response to Taiwan legislature's decision to amend the Act Governing Food Sanitation which violates the beef protocol signed between Taiwan and the United States. Local newspapers have prominent coverage of stories on the matter, stating that the controversy has become the first crisis in U.S.-Taiwan relations since Ma Ying-jeou assumed office in May 2008. Local newspapers were very concerned about how the Ma Ying-jeou administration is going to explain to the United States about this matter. A review of the year 2009 and events to welcome the year 2010 all around the island of Taiwan are also covered extensively in newspapers.

12. There are various editorials and commentaries on the U.S. beef controversy. An editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" warned that the people of Taiwan and the legislature have to be ready to jointly take the punishment that the United States is going to mete out to Taiwan. An op-ed in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said it is true the United States is very angry at the legislature for revising the amendments to the Act Governing Food Sanitation which violates the beef protocol signed between Taiwan and the United States. However, it is unlikely that the United States will retaliate against Taiwan on all matters. An editorial in the KMT-leaning "China Times" criticized the Legislative Yuan's cross-party consensus to amend the Act which violates the beef protocol signed between Taiwan and the United States. The editorial said the legislature's decision has tainted Taiwan's credibility internationally and the legislature must be accountable for the outcome of the decision. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" raised several issues remained to be watched closely following the legislature's decision to amend the Act. The editorial further added that the U.S. beef issue should serve as a good lesson for the Ma Ying-jeou administration if the Ma administration insists on signing an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with China. An editorial in another pro-independence paper, the English-language "Taiwan News" urged the United States to respect the will of the Taiwan people and the reality of Taiwan's democratic system. Regarding relations between the United States and Taiwan, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" echoed an article written by Bruce Gillery in a journal "Foreign Affairs" saying that Taiwan is quickly undergoing a process of "Finlandization." The editorial blamed President Ma Ying-jeou's ultimate goal of "sinicizing" Taiwan and reminded the United States to take Taiwan's mainstream public opinion seriously. End summary.

13. U.S. Beef Imports

A) "Retribution for Black Box Work"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (12/31):

"The storm around the U.S. beef issue is getting close to Taiwan. The United States' retaliation will be shared by all people in Taiwan and the outcome is still difficult to predict. From now on,

Taiwan has to be mentally prepared for retaliation by the United States and China from time to time. ...

"The United States will have a lot of retaliatory measures, such as refusing to discuss the framework of economic and trade favors between the United States and Taiwan, lowering the level of visits between officials, and delaying visa-waiver treatment. [Taiwan's National Security Council Secretary-General] Su Chi and other people signed the deal [with the United States] secretly, and the result has to be shouldered by the legislature and all the people of Taiwan. The Ma Ying-jeou administration is in big trouble. ..."

B) "To Prevent a Tilt Toward China, U.S. Anger Will Not Result in Unlimited Retaliation"

Yen Chen-shen, a research fellow at the First Division of the Institute of International Relations (IIR) at the National Chengchi University, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (12/31):

"... Will the United States really take retaliatory measures [against Taiwan]? If we simply look at the conclusion of a joint statement by the two deputy chiefs of the two U.S. departments, 'This is a serious matter that concerns us greatly and we are monitoring the legislative process very closely,' the United States is really very angry. However, it is unlikely that [the United States] will link this issue to other non-economic issues. The U.S. Congress just approved arms sales to Taiwan which have been delayed for years. There is no need to pull back the sales, and it is impossible that the United States would do so. Regarding the people of Taiwan being included in the United States' visa-waiver program, it is mainly an issue which is foundering on technical problems with Taiwan passports. After the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

issues new passports [with electronic chips], the United States should respond with goodwill. After all, under the circumstances of the economic downturn in the United States, it is unlikely that [the United States] would set aside its desire to increase the number of visiting tourists.

"Under the circumstances of closer cross-Straits relations, if the United States retaliates against Taiwan in any form, such as indefinitely postponing the talks on Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), or refusing to discuss a free trade agreement (FTA), it will only further warm up the economic and trade relationships between Taiwan and China which are already hot. Once a cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) is signed, the mutual reliance of the cross-Straits economies will increase and such an outcome would have an impact on the economic and trade relationship between Taiwan and the United States. This will certainly not be a development that Washington is pleased to see. Based on this perspective, it is predictable that the United States is unlikely to take non-economic retaliatory measures [against Taiwan]. Even though [the United States] is discontent with our executive branch, it will only throw some tough questions to Taiwan about economic issues - which will not push Taiwan towards mainland China. [Such a move is] to make Taipei understand the guiding role of the United States in U.S.-Taiwan relations."

C) "Legislative Yuan Likely to Pay a Stiff Price for Amending Law to Obstruct U.S. Beef"

The KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] editorialized (12/31):

"... Whether the Legislative Yuan's amendment [to the Act Governing Food Sanitation] is a result of careful deliberation, or an irresponsible decision, will have to be evaluated based on the effects internally or externally. In one word, the Legislative Yuan must take political responsibility for a decision which concerns foreign affairs. ... Taiwan, as a sovereign country which should abide by international commitments, must be responsible for commitments made by its diplomatic representatives. The beef protocol is within the discretion of the executive branch and does not transcend [the executive authority]. It is unjustifiable to make laws to retract [the protocol]. ..."

D) "U.S. Beef as an ECFA Litmus Test"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (12/31):

"... At an unscheduled press conference yesterday, Presidential Office Spokesman Wang Yu-chi said that after the legislative recess, Ma would form a task force of lawmakers, experts, civic groups and consumer groups to visit the U.S. on a fact-finding mission. An obvious question is why Ma did not think of this before acting unilaterally and negotiating with the U.S. on lifting beef bans. Had he done so, he could have saved himself the embarrassment that has eventuated. ..."

"The next question is whether anyone from the executive responsible for this political and diplomatic mess - say, National Security Council Secretary-General Su Chi, who ought to be dealing with security threats, not food fights - will be held to account for the resources that have been wasted on this issue over the past two months. ..."

E) "Taiwan Lawmakers Send Message to U.S. and PRC"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (12/31):

"The bipartisan consensus reached Tuesday in Taiwan's national legislature to agree to approve amendments to the food sanitation act banning imports of risky beef products from countries where cases of mad cow disease have been documented sent a ringing message that foreign powers cannot ignore the will of the Taiwan people and the reality of Taiwan's democratic system. ..."

"Not surprisingly, the U.S. government is somewhat peeved at the reversal. A joint statement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative Office expressed disappointment that the proposed changes would 'unjustifiably bar import of certain U.S. beef and beef products,' 'have no basis in science or fact' and would constitute an 'unilateral abrogation' of the October 22 protocol that would impact 'on Taiwan's reputation as a reliable trading partner and responsible member of the international community.'"

"The USDA and USTR neglected to note that the revisions would basically just continue an existing ban and also skip over the facts that the risk caucus for BSE is entirely different from other
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pathogens and that there is no 'acceptable' level of risk for the entry of BSE into Taiwan's food chain. As noted by the USDA's own Food Safety and Inspection Service, there are no effective preventative tests or effective treatment for BSE and prions, the suspected agent, cannot be killed by cooking, which means that consumers cannot 'protect themselves.' ..."

"Although National Security Council Secretary-General Su Chi publically declared that the protocol was 'above domestic law,' the presidential office shifted gears yesterday and urged Washington to respect the public will expressed through Taiwan's democratic process and announced that it would send a delegation to Washington to explain the Legislative Yuan's actions. Hopefully, the Ma government will include lawmakers from all parties who are knowledgeable in public health affairs and representatives from Taiwan consumer and health related civic organizations so that U.S. officials can get a comprehensive account with a minimum of partisan distortion. ..."

4. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

"We Want To Remind the United States: Look at the Mainstream Public Opinion in Taiwan"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] editorialized (12/31):

"President Ma Ying-jeou's leaning toward China has put Taiwan's allies on their guard. In the latest edition of the journal 'Foreign Affairs,' U.S. scholar Bruce Gillery pointed out that

Finland had a reconciliation policy to appeal to the former Soviet Union during the Cold War to maintain Finland's autonomy and not to be annexed by the former Soviet Union; the circumstances of Taiwan, after Ma Ying-jeou took office, are very similar to that of post-war Finland. Gillery also recommended that the United States cease arms sales to Taiwan, and make Taiwan neutral, and exclude Taiwan from [the United States'] alliances in Asia. ...

"Using Finlandization to describe the Ma administration's leaning toward China perhaps underestimates how serious the situation is. To be more appropriate, the Ma administration has not only Finlandized Taiwan, even more, [the Ma administration] has sinicized Taiwan. ...

"It is not hard to imagine that if President Ma purposely sinicizes Taiwan, the United States' ongoing arms sales to Taiwan would be the equivalent of selling the U.S. arms to China, and [U.S.] arms would be likely to be used by China to attack the United States. Therefore, Gillery recommended that the United States cease arms sales to Taiwan. ...

"In fact, even if the Ma administration leans toward China, most of the people of Taiwan still prefer independence and autonomy. The U.S. academic circles and the U.S. government should be on their guard with an eye to the Ma administration and at the same time accurately see the mainstream public opinion in Taiwan. ..."

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